



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Leslie Piotrowski  
(847) 377-8055  
Tiffany Bronk  
(847) 377-8099

### **Keeping Pets Safe in Winter Weather**

Not only can winter weather be a time of illness and injury if people fail to take appropriate health and safety precautions, but harsh conditions can be tough on pets as well. Following are some tips from the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center on how to help keep your pet safe and healthy this winter.

- Do not leave dogs outdoors when it becomes uncomfortably cold. Most dogs and cats are safer indoors except when taken out for exercise. Regardless of the season, short-haired, very young or old dogs, and all cats should never be left outside without supervision. Short-coated dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater during walks. If your pet is shivering, it's time to bring it inside.
- No matter what the temperature, wind chill can threaten a pet's life. If your dog is an outdoor dog, he or she should be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to allow the dog to sit and lie down comfortably, but small enough

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to hold in his or her body heat. The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. The house should face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with waterproof covering or heavy plastic.

- Pets that spend a lot of time outside during the winter need more food because keeping warm depletes energy. Make sure to routinely check your pet's water dish to make sure water is fresh and unfrozen. Use plastic food and water bowls because when the temperature is low, the pet's tongue can stick and freeze to the metal.
- Salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet. Wipe the feet with a damp towel before your pet licks them and irritates his or her mouth.
- Antifreeze is a deadly poison that has a sweet taste, which may attract animals. Wipe up spills and store antifreeze out of reach. If possible, use antifreeze coolant made with propylene glycol. If this is swallowed in small amounts, it will not hurt pets.
- Do not allow your dog to run freely on open ice. It can be difficult to judge the safety of the ice, and your dog could be at risk of falling through.

During the winter, it is best to keep your pets inside with the family. The happiest dogs are those that are taken out frequently for walks and exercise, but are kept inside the rest of the time. Dogs and cats crave human companionship and should be indoors with you and your family.

For more information on pet safety, please call the Health Department's Animal Care and Control facility at: (847) 949-9925.

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